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THE

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A HANDBOOK OF A NEW ORDER OF THE SEVERAL BOOKS, ACCORDING TO THE RESULTS OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM

WITH

BRIEF NOTICES, WHERE REQUIRED, ON THE AUTHORSHIP AND CHARACTER OF EACH BOOK

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PREFACE.

THERE must be thousands of readers who have neither the time nor the training required for mastering long works on Biblical criticism, yet would be glad to possess, set down in a compendious form, some of the main conclusions at which that criticism has arrived. In particular, three principal questions confront the student at the opening of any book:—what is its date? who wrote it? and what is its general drift and character? It is the object of the following pages to show very briefly, as far as the writer's

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knowledge and judgment reach, how some or all of these questions have been answered by Biblical criticism, as regards the several books of the Bible. Little but the bare conclusions is given, the scope of the book precluding any summary of the evidence on which they rest; but no conclusion is set down that is not in the opinion of the compiler either well established, or so probable as to deserve respectful attention. Where results are uncertain such uncertainty is noted. Of course many of the conclusions here recorded have been, and still are, hotly contested, and some of them, here and there, may be mistaken, but they rest, as a whole, on too solid a base of evidence to be overthrown. If their general effect be at first to startle the uncritical reader, and upset some of his preconceived opinions, yet their

final effect, as the writer believes, will prove to be of a different kind. They will lead him to a truer, and therefore better, appreciation of the Bible. They will help him to study it with reverential intelligence. They will convince him that Revelation, however we may define it, is progressive, and relative to the age which receives it; that the truth conveyed must be carefully distinguished from the "earthen vessels" which contain it, and the alloy with which it is mixed; and that it is conveyed "in divers portions and in divers manners."

Men say that the Bible is losing, or has lost, its hold on the affection of the people. If it be so, it is because the people have an uneasy suspicion that their teachers either do not know (as is often the case), or will not tell them, the whole truth about it. The

first thing to be done, if we would restore it to the place which is its due, is to tell that truth without fear or favour. It is the object of this little book to take the first necessary step in that direction.

It would be a great help if our admirable Revised Version of the Bible could be printed in the chronological order of the several Books, and with such differences of type as might serve to mark difference of origin, wherever that difference cannot reasonably be questioned.

In fixing the place in the general stream of events of the issue of the several Books it was necessary to follow some one system of chronology. The system adopted for the Old Testament is that of Conder, given in his "Handbook to the Bible;" for the New Testament, that of Renan. Other

systems vary a few years, as regards the dates of particular events, but for the purposes of this book the variation is practically unimportant, our object being to mark the relative order in time of the several Books, not the precise date of their issue, which cannot now be ascertained.

[In the following list the several Books of the Bible are set down under their common titles in the order in which it seems probable that they were originally composed.]

The Old Testament.

1. The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua.

These books are put first, not because they are, in their present form, the oldest part of the Bible, but because certain parts of them are older than any of the other writings. In their present finished and compacted form they date from the time of Ezra (B.C. 460), and later. In this last revision a good deal of new matter was added, and the finishing touches were put to a work which had been built up during several centuries, partly from oral tradition

(as was the case probably with a good deal of the "Thorah," or Law), partly from various written documents. Comparing it to a geological formation, we find the following strata embedded in the present book, rising from the deepest and earliest to the most recent.

(1) The "ten words" (Deut. iv. 14) by Moses. The Ten Commandments, originally in a shorter than their present form.

(2) Exodus xx. 22—xxiii. 33. The "Book of the Covenant," mentioned Exod. xxiv. 7. A simple law for an agricultural population.

(3) A narrative of past events and traditions gradually formed among the "Sons of the Prophets." The parts derived from this are distinguished by the use of the name "The Lord" (Jehovah, or more correctly Jahveh) for the supreme Deity.

(4) Deuteronomy xx. 1—xxix. 1. A second set of laws for a more advanced and complex civilization. In this the "high places" are abolished, and the Levites brought up to Jerusalem.

(5) A narrative of patriarchal and Mosaic times, and a history of Joshua, gradually formed among the Priests. The parts derived from this are distinguished by the use of the name "God" (Elohim, a plural noun) for the supreme Deity.

(6) Deuteronomy iv. 44—xxix. 1, excluding xxviii. The "Book of the Law" "found" in the time of Josiah (B.C. 631–600), as mentioned 2 Kings xxii. 8.

(7) Deuteronomy in full, and Joshua, much as we now have them.

(8) Priestly legislation in three groups. In this legislation a distinc-

tion is made between Priests and Levites.

Group A.—Leviticus xviii.–xxiii., xxv., xxvi. Characteristic word, "congregation."

Group B.—Exodus xii., xxv.–xxxi. Leviticus i. 1–17, xxiv., xxvii.

Most of the priestly documents in Numbers.

Group C.—Later additions, usually closely united with the older parts, in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers.

We observe in these groups growth, addition, amplification, alteration.

2. The Book of Judges.

This book was constructed on the basis of older documents and traditions, probably during the time of the kings; that is, in the long period between (roughly) 1050 and 677 B.C. It is impossible to fix its date in this

period with certainty. It shows the people at a lower level of religion and culture than that described in the Pentateuch. It has not the value of a contemporary record, but, while allowing much of its roughness to remain, throws back into an earlier age the beliefs and feelings of a later one.

Speaking generally, we see in it the process by which the disunited Tribes gradually grew into a nation, and, after long struggles with them, absorbed the Canaanite population.

Chapters xix.–xxi. are a kind of appendix, and give two narratives of events which were earlier in date than most of those that precede them in the book.

3. The two Books of Samuel.

This book also was probably put together during the time of the kings.

It is derived from different sources, which do not always agree with one another; for instance, in the conflicting accounts of David's early relations with Saul. The same remarks apply to this book which apply to Judges.

PRELIMINARY NOTE.—Before passing on to the first of the Prophets who left writings behind them, it should be noted that, in order to really understand their writings, the reader should make himself familiar with the general history of the times in which these Prophets severally lived, and, in many cases, played a most important part.

4. Amos.

A prophet of Judah, who had a mission to the Northern Kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam II. (B.C. 816–775), and, on being driven out

thence, returned to Judah, and wrote this book. This book is important as containing the first writing in the Old Testament, the author of which was certainly contemporary with the events that he describes.

5. **Hosea.**

A prophet of the Northern Kingdom, who, after long labouring there, went apparently to Judah, and there wrote this book. He was a little later than Amos, and wrote towards the end of the reign of Jeroboam II. (B.C. 816–775).

6. **The Song of Songs.**

Ascribed in the preface to Solomon, but there are weighty reasons against its being held to be of so early a date. It was not finally fixed in the Hebrew Canon till late. See the

note at the end of the books of the Old Testament.

It appears to belong to the time of the kings, and was perhaps written during the reign of Jeroboam II. (B.C. 816–775). It is a question whether it is one connected piece, or a collection of separate pieces. The controversy between those who maintain a spiritual interpretation of the whole poem and those who impugn it is ancient, and, perhaps, from the nature of the case, incapable of final settlement.

7. The Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

This book, as we have it now, is the work of at least two authors of very different date. Roughly speaking, the first part is due to the great prophet of Judah, who is named in

the heading i. 1, and flourished about 750–710 B.C.; the second part, from chap. xl. onwards, to an unnamed writer of the time of Cyrus (B.C. 539). But, in the view of most critics, the division is not so simple as this; certain portions of the earlier part being also due to the later writer, and certain others to other anonymous writers. The details of distribution may, in several cases, be doubtful, but the main distinction given above is not so.

All the chief critics agree in referring the following pieces to the time of the exile: xiii., xiv. 23. xxiv.–xxvii. (Ewald alone dates this *after* the return), xxxiv., xxxv., and xl.–lxvi.

8. Micah.

A prophet of Judah: a younger contemporary of Isaiah.

9. The Proverbs.

This book is made up of several collections formed partly before, partly during, the reign of Hezekiah (B.C. 717–688). The present arrangement of the collection is a good deal later than this, as is shown by the different order of the parts in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures made 250–on B.C.).

The principal component parts are :

i.–ix. A poem in praise of wisdom.

x.–xxii. 16. "The proverbs of Solomon."

xxii. 17—xxiv. 22. "The words of the wise."

xxv.–xxix. "Also proverbs of Solomon."

10. Joel.

A prophet of Judah, who wrote on the occasion of a plague of locusts

and subsequent drought. It is very difficult to fix his date. Some critics place him *first* on the list of Prophets, in the time of Joash, king of Judah (B.C. 870–830), but there is strong evidence which points to a date at least a century later, and it therefore seems safer to place him here.

11. The Book of Job.

It is impossible to fix the date of this book with certainty, but it probably comes in somewhere about here. The position of "the Adversary" (Satan, A.V.), intermediate as it is between earlier and later views of the source of evil, is the chief indication of date.

The object of the poem—it is a poem, not a history, though it may have some basis of facts—is to show that the unequal fortunes of men are

no clear sign of their moral worth, or of God's retributive justice. "The designs of the All-mighty and All-wise are inscrutable to vile mortals:" they must have faith and submit.

The episode of Elihu, chapters xxxii.–xxxvii., seems to have been inserted later.

12. Nahum.

A prophet of the Northern Kingdom, living apparently in exile in Assyria. He wrote in view of an attack upon Nineveh, which may have been that of Phraortes, about 636 B.C.

13. Zephaniah.

A prophet of Judah, who wrote during the earlier part of Josiah's reign (B.C. 631–600).

14. The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.

A prophet of Judah and a priest. He began to prophesy about 618 B.C., to write about 604 B.C. The main portion of the book, as we have it now, dates from a time subsequent to the fall of Jerusalem. He seems to have himself arranged (or, as we should now say, edited) his prophecies more than once, and the Septuagint translation shows that further arrangements were made at a later date. There is some confusion in the present chronological order of the pieces.

15. Habakkuk.

A prophet of Judah, probably a priest. He appears to belong to the reign of Jehoiakim (B.C. 599–588). Chapter iii. is arranged as a Psalm to

be sung and played, probably in the Temple, and has musical notes attached.

16. Zechariah ix.–xiv.

These are two pieces of an earlier date than Zech. i.–ix., by an unknown prophet of Judah, who wrote a little later than Habakkuk. When the Prophets were edited as a whole, they were added to the writings of the real Zechariah. It is conjectured that xii. 7–9 has got misplaced, and should come after xi. 17, as the close of the first piece.

17. Obadiah.

This little book was written soon after the destruction of Jerusalem (B.C. 577). Nothing is known of the author. The subject of the prophecy is the impending doom of selfish Edom.

It is probable that an older prophecy of some contemporary of Isaiah is taken up into this book.

18. The Lamentations of Jeremiah.

His name does not appear in the piece, but it is ascribed to him in the Septuagint. This book is a collection of five separate acrostic poems (the fifth confused in arrangement) which are connected by their subject—the recent destruction of Jerusalem (B.C. 577).

19. The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel was a priest, and one of the first group of exiles from Jerusalem (2 Kings xxiv. 14). He lived by the river Chebar, in a small town of Mesopotamia. His work as a prophet

began some years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and was continued long after that event. He began to write about 592 B.C., but the whole book is arranged by himself, and is therefore of a later date.

The writings of Ezekiel mark a change of style in prophetical literature. He is the first strictly literary prophet, who *imagines* visions rather than *sees* them.

20. The two Books of the Kings.

These books appear to have been compiled in Babylonia during the latter half of the exile, which ended 537 B.C.

It would seem that the material used in making these books was of two kinds: 1. Official or other records of the several reigns, which are fre-

quently referred to, and which furnish the historical framework of the whole. 2. Other sources of various historical value, which are not named, and from which various details and episodes are filled in, sometimes sparingly, sometimes with a liberal hand. An instance of 2 is to be found in the stories about Elisha (2 Kings v.–viii. 6), where "the king of Israel" is frequently referred to, but never named.

21. **The writings of the anonymous Prophet** (Isa. xl.–lxvi., &c.) **come in about this time.** (See above, 7.)

22. **Haggai.**

A prophet of Jerusalem, who urged on the Jews to complete the rebuilding of the Temple, 521 B.C. The Temple was finished in 517 B.C.

23. **Zechariah i.-ix.**

A prophet of Jerusalem, who prophesied at the same time and under the same circumstances as Haggai. He carried a good deal further the new use of prophetic visions begun by Ezekiel. (See above, 16.)

24. **The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua in their present state come in somewhere here.**

25. **The Book of Ruth.**

This book is placed by some critics about 500 B.C., by others later, in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (460–435 B.C.).

A romantic tale of a long past time, written to emphasise the fact that a "Moabitish woman" was the worthy ancestress of the great national hero David.

26. Jonah.

Of about the same date as Ruth. A Jonah is mentioned 2 Kings xiv. 5.

This book is not a prophecy, in the usual sense of the term, but a prophetic tale, written to exhibit Jehovah's readiness to pardon the heathen on their repentance.

27. The Psalms.

This collection, as we have it, is divided into five separate books, which are marked in the Revised Version. These books were formed successively, or in groups, 1, 2, and 3, 4 and 5, at different times, extending over a long period. The titles of the Psalms cannot be trusted. Many Psalms date from the time of the kings, and some of the earliest *may* reach back to the time of David,

though it is probable that they do not; the latest suit best the time of the Maccabees (168 B.C.) Under these circumstances it is difficult to know where to fix the Psalms, as one book, in a chronological series. They are placed here because the book, in its present form, was probably compiled for use in the restored Temple, but, if we look to the earliest parts, it should have come in much earlier; if to the latest, probably later.

28. **Malachi.**

Written about 50 years after Zechariah, *i.e.*, about 470 B.C. The name of the writer is not known. Malachi, meaning "my messenger," is a title taken by the editor from chap. iii. 1, and prefixed to the whole piece.

It should be noted here, at the close of this last Prophet, that the books of

the Prophets, in their present form, have all been edited, sometimes by themselves, sometimes by others, and the name and date of the author generally prefixed to each separate work. It is probable that the pieces of various anonymous Prophets, as is certain in the case of the second Isaiah, have been inserted in, or added to, the writings of the named Prophets, where thought desirable.

29. The two Books of the Chronicles, Ezra, and the Book of Nehemiah.

These books are all of the same authorship, and seem to have been compiled about 300–250 B.C.

The Chronicles have an historical value far inferior to that of 1 and 2 Kings. When compared with these latter, both as to what they omit and

as to what they insert, they betray a strong hierarchical bias.

Ezra and Nehemiah were compiled from memoranda of those two persons, who were Tirshathas, *i.e.*, Governors under the Persian kings, and other contemporary historical documents.

Note that Ezra iv. 6–23 is inserted in the wrong place. It refers not to the rebuilding of the Temple, but to the rebuilding of the walls.

30. The Book of Esther.

The date is uncertain: perhaps it was written as early as the third century, 300–200 B.C.

This book is not an authentic historical writing. It is a question whether it contains a nucleus of facts, or is simply a romantic tale. In any case, its object is to commend the observation of the feast of Purim.

31. Ecclesiastes; or The Preacher.

This book appears to date from the close of the third century B.C. The author of it was a pessimist, with whom traditional belief remained because it was traditional, but "gave neither light nor warmth." He puts his preaching into the mouth of Solomon for literary purposes.

32. The Book of Daniel.

Written about 168 B.C.

This book is not a prophecy, in the common sense of the term, but an Apocalypse. It contains, first a number of pious tales, of which Daniel and his companions are the heroes, and next a series of visions, of which Daniel is the recipient. A Daniel is mentioned Ezek. xiv. 14. The

tales, which are romantic, not pure history, refer to the time of the exile; the visions give a detailed history under the veil of prophecy of certain past events, which end with 168 B.C. In this book the tendency to the free use of visions, begun by Ezekiel and carried further by Zechariah, reaches its final development. The book was written to encourage the Jews in their heroic struggle under the Maccabees against Antiochus Epiphanes.

Compare the case of the books Jonah and Ecclesiastes.

NOTE.—The following passage from Professor Robertson Smith's "Old Testament in the Jewish Church," p. 130, may throw some light on the above chronological arrangement of the Books of the Old Testament.

"The Hebrew Bible has twenty-four books arranged in three great sections —the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa. The first section is the Pentateuch, or, as the Hebrews call it, 'the Five-fifths of the Law.' The second section has two subdivisions, the prophetical histories, or 'earlier Prophets,' and the prophetic books proper, which the Hebrews call the 'later Prophets.' . . . . The third section of the Hebrew Bible consists of what are called the Hagiographa, or Ketûbîm, that is, sacred writings. At the head of these stand three poetical books — Psalms, Proverbs, and Job. Then come the five small books of Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, , Ecclesiastes, and Esther, which the Hebrews name the Megilloth, or 'rolls.' . . . . Last

of all, at the end of the Hebrew Bible, stand Daniel, Ezra with Nehemiah (forming a single book), and the Chronicles."

Every thoughtful reader of the Bible must have observed that the leap from the last of the Prophets, Malachi, to the earliest writings of the New Testament is a tremendous one. The opening of the Gospel history places us at once in the midst of a new scene, most of the features of which are quite unlike those with which we have been made familiar by the Old Testament. This chasm has been partially bridged by the chronological arrangement of the books of the Old Testament set forth above, but, to improve the connection, the books of the Apocrypha should be studied. They are to be found partly in the English Version of the

books recognised, though not counted canonical, in Article VI. of the Church of England, partly in the Vulgate, or Latin Version, in which the Church of Rome ranks them side by side with the rest of Scripture. These books are of various, sometimes doubtful, dates, and various value, but a perusal of them will not only throw further light on the changes in thought and manners that were taking place during the times in which they were written, but will serve to show that such books as Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Daniel do not stand alone, but find their place in the literature of the period to which they belong.

The New Testament.

1. The two Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians.

Written about 54 A.D.

These, the two earliest of St. Paul's extant letters, were written, the first from Corinth, the second probably from the same place, to a Church which St. Paul had founded a few months before at Thessalonica.

The authenticity of both letters has been called in question, but on very insufficient grounds in the case of the first letter, and with no convincing

reason, though with higher probability, in that of the second.

2. The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians.

Written about 54 A.D.

It is a very probable conjecture that by the Galatians are meant the inland Asiatic Churches, which St. Paul founded in his first missionary journey (Acts xiii., xiv.).

This letter marks the extreme point in the position taken up by St. Paul as the Apostle of the Gentiles. It was written to vindicate his own apostolic authority, and to prevent the adoption of the Mosaic Law (to which they were solicited) as a necessary part of their Christianity by Gentile converts. It contains much personal history, and is most important, from its early date, in that respect. The

account here given should be compared with the later account given in the Acts, from which it differs in several important points. The letter was written probably from Ephesus, about the same time as 1 Corinthians, but the order of priority is not certain.

3. The two Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians.

The first letter was written from Ephesus about 57 A.D., in reply to certain questions sent to the apostle by the Corinthian Church, which he had founded (Acts xviii.). It is specially valuable as giving us a picture of the internal condition of an early Christian community. It also contains the *earliest historical notice* of the institution of the Lord's Supper (compare the account in St. Luke), and of the Resurrection.

The second letter followed the first in a few months, being written during St. Paul's journey towards Corinth through Northern Greece. It contains a vehement defence of St. Paul's personal authority against certain Jewish Christians, then present at Corinth, who impugned it.

It is worth noting that 2 Cor. vi. 14—vii. 1, is probably a fragment from some other writing of St. Paul, inserted here for preservation when the Epistles were finally edited.

4. The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans.

Written from Corinth 58 A.D.

All St. Paul's previous letters were called forth by and addressed to the settlement of particular questions, as they arose. This letter is of a different character. It contains a sys-

tematic statement of the peculiar "gospel" which he preached; that is, of his great doctrine of justification by faith, and its place in the economy of Divine Providence. Without abandoning the position taken up in the Galatians, St. Paul, in this letter, breathes a spirit of conciliation towards Jewish Christians, and thereby marks the first step taken towards the union of the two contending parties, by which the early Church was divided.

This Epistle, as it stands, has four or five different endings. It is a very probable conjecture that it was a circular letter addressed to Romans, Ephesians, Thessalonians, and an unknown Church, with separate conclusions for each Church; and that when St. Paul's letters came to be collected and edited (about 150–160 A.D.), these

various endings were added to one another, that nothing might be lost, the copy to the Romans being taken as the basis of the whole.

According to this the division may be made as follows:

To the Romans — chapters i.–xi. and xv.

To the Ephesians—chapters i.–xiv. and xvi. 1–20.

To the Thessalonians — chapters i.–xiv. and xvi. 21–24.

To an unknown Church—chapters i.–xiv. and xvi. 25–27.

5. The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians.

Written from Rome 61 A.D.

A great change had come over St. Paul's life since the date of his last letter. He had been arrested at Jerusalem, kept in confinement for

two years at Cæsarea, and then sent a prisoner to Rome. Thence, still a prisoner, he wrote this letter. It tells its own story. There was no Church with which St. Paul's relations were so close and affectionate as they were with the Christians of Philippi.

The authenticity of this letter has been called in question, but the probabilities of its being genuine are very strong, if not overwhelming.

6. The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians.

Ascribed to St. Paul, and, if his, written whilst he was still a prisoner at Rome, 62 A.D.

It seems equally difficult to believe that this letter, in its present form, is either all or none of it St. Paul's. The supposition that it is a genuine letter, amplified and retouched by

others at a later date, meets many of the difficulties. The object of the letter is to correct certain Gnostic views concerning the person of Jesus Christ, by defining His true nature and position.

7. The Epistle of Paul to Philemon.

Written 62 A.D.

A private and personal letter about the reception of a runaway slave, whom St. Paul persuaded to return to his owner, despatched at the same time as the letter to the Colossians. Philemon probably lived at Colossæ.

8. The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians.

Ascribed to St. Paul, and, if his, written from Rome 62 A.D., and dispatched at the same time as the two

preceding letters. This is in all probability a circular letter, sent to several churches in Asia Minor, of which Ephesus was the chief.

It is still more difficult than in the case of the Colossians to consider that we have this letter, as it stands, at first hand from St. Paul. The writer of it had the "Colossians" before him, and it has been conjectured that the Apostle, after finishing that letter (in its original state) confided the composition of this on the same general lines to a disciple. This, however, does not account for much in this letter that savours of a later age, especially the doctrine concerning the universal Church.

9. The general Epistle of James.

If, as there seems no sufficient

reason to deny, though it was early called in question, this letter is from the pen of "James, the Lord's brother" (Gal. i. 19), it was probably written at Jerusalem, not long before his death, which took place 63–64 A.D. It presents us with the Jewish Christian side of Christianity, and is addressed to Jewish Christians, not, as has been sometimes erroneously thought, to Jews.

10. The First Epistle general of Peter.

Written probably from Rome, which was mystically called "Babylon" by the early Christians, about 63 A.D.

This letter is accepted by some weighty critics as a genuine work of St. Peter, while others entertain grave doubts as to the authorship. It is urged that the whole tone of the letter

is unlike what might have been expected of a "pillar" of the Jewish Christian party, and savours of a date later than the lifetime of St. Peter.

It is a work of a practical tendency, addressed to Christians scattered through the Provinces of Asia Minor, who were at the time exposed to persecution; and, if not St. Peter's, it probably came from the hand of a member of the Pauline party, during the persecution of Trajan, which took place 112 A.D.

11. The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews.

Certainly not by St. Paul—neither does it profess to be—nor addressed to the Church at Jerusalem. All that can be said for certain of the author (for whom various names have been suggested), is that he was an Hellenist

of the school of St. Paul; of the persons addressed, that they were Jewish Christians, perhaps in Syria, perhaps at Rome. The place of writing is unknown, the date is variously fixed between 65 and 70 A.D., a little before the fall of Jerusalem, which occurred 70 A.D.

The doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ contained in this letter is an advance on that of St. Paul, and marks the passage between it and that of the Gospel according to St. John.

12. The Revelation of St. John the Divine.

Written 68–69 A.D.

An "apocalypse," to be compared with Daniel. It is commonly assumed that the author was St. John the Apostle, but there is much ground for doubt, and this doubt was expressed in very early times.

Recent criticism gives weighty reasons for supposing that in this book we have—(1) an original Jewish apocalypse (such writings were not uncommon) with Christian interpolations, extending from iv. 1 to xxii. 5; and (2) a Christian frame, in which it is, as it were, set, consisting of i.–iv., and xxii. 6–21. According to this view the original Jewish work dates from 68–69 A.D., whilst the Christian interpolations and additions were made later, and not all at once, the book not finally taking its present shape till about 136–140 A.D.

These conclusions cannot yet be regarded as established, but they are so suggestive as to deserve mention here.

13. **The general Epistle of Jude.**

Supposed to have been written by

Jude, the brother of James and of the Lord, probably a little before the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred 70 A.D. The allusion in verse 17 would seem to point to a later date, and the authenticity of the letter was early called in question.

It is a simple letter of exhortation and warning against certain immoral corrupters of the faith, whom it is impossible now to identify.

Some writers place it as early as 54 A.D.

PRELIMINARY NOTE.—The four existing Gospels are first mentioned by their names about 180 A.D. The three first, called the Synoptic Gospels, are based on a common tradition, and draw largely from a common source, which is now lost. Critics are generally agreed that they came into

existence during the period extending from 66 A.D., at earliest, to 100 A.D., but they differ as to the exact date to be assigned to each, and as to the order of priority between the two first on the list. The following order has the balance of probability in its favour.

14. The Gospel according to St. Mark.

"According to" does not necessarily mean by, but the Gospel is with much unanimity ascribed to St. Mark, the companion both of St. Paul and St. Peter. It was probably composed at Rome about 76 A.D.

Those who consider that it is condensed in the main from the other two Synoptic Gospels place it, of course, after them in date, about 100 A.D.

The concluding fragment, xvi. 9–20,

does not belong to the original Gospel, but was added at a later though still early date, perhaps to supply the place of an original ending now lost.

In this Gospel the wonderful personality of Jesus Christ is the point brought most into prominence.

15. The Gospel according to St. Matthew.

Ascribed, but with no certainty, to St. Matthew. Those who consider this the earliest Gospel date it 66 A.D., at earliest; but the Gospel, in its present form, bears traces of more than one edition, and probably does not date earlier than 85 A.D. It appears to have been written in Syria for the use of Jewish Christians. This Gospel bears some relation to, but is not identical with, a "Gospel of the Hebrews," some fragments of which alone survive.

In this Gospel Jesus Christ is presented as the Messiah of the Jews, and great stress is laid on the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.

16. **The Gospel according to St. Luke.**

Written probably by St. Luke, and at Rome, about 90–94 A.D.

This is the Gentile Gospel, dwelling on the universal character of Christianity, and representing the school of St. Paul. It differs in many respects in chronological order from the two earlier Gospels, and it follows a different account of the Passion.

17. **The Acts of the Apostles.**

Written by the same author as the Gospel according to St. Luke, of which it is a continuation, and probably about ten years later than it, *i.e.*, about 100–104 A.D. It is noteworthy that in the

Gospel the Ascension seems to follow the Resurrection on the same day; in the Acts there is an interval of forty days.

This book was composed at a time when the sharp edges of the difference which divided the party of the circumcision and that of St. Paul (as shown in St. Paul's letters) had been rounded off. The result is that St. Peter and St. Paul, the two principal subjects of the book, lose something of their distinctive character, and the tale of the early days of Christianity is so handled as to show that there is equally room for the parties of both in the common Church.

18. The First Epistle general of John.

The question of the authorship and date of this letter is bound up with

that respecting the Gospel according to St. John, for which see below. There are some critics who think that the Gospel and Epistle are not from the same hand, but only from the same school. In any case the Epistle was probably issued a little before the Gospel.

The Second and Third Epistles of John.

These two letters may well be by the same hand as the First Epistle, but the writer styles himself "the Elder," and there is much obscurity on the subject. They are private and personal letters, and probably of about the same date as the First Epistle.

19. **The Gospel according to St. John.**

Written in Asia Minor, probably at Ephesus, somewhere in the first quarter

of the second century of our era, *i.e.*, between 100 and 125 A.D., or possibly not till 140 A.D.

The many difficulties which beset the question of the authorship of this Gospel are perhaps best met by supposing that it was grounded upon certain data given by St. John originally, and freely worked up, after his death, into a consistent whole by one or more of his disciples. The last chapter is an appendix by the same hand. There are many weighty critics who deny all connection between St. John and this Gospel.

The history of the ministry of Jesus Christ given in this Gospel is different from that of the Synoptics, and, in spite of all efforts to the contrary, cannot reasonably be harmonised with it.

In this Gospel the doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ is carried to

the highest point reached within the limits of the New Testament, by presenting Him as the "Word made flesh."

20. The two Epistles of Paul the Apostle to Timothy. The Epistle of Paul to Titus.

Written probably about 127 A.D.

The order of these three "Pastoral Epistles" probably is 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 Timothy. There are some critics who, while maintaining the genuineness of the first two in that order, doubt that of the third; these would date 1 Timothy about 100 A.D. But the general opinion is that, as all three are clearly from the same hand, they must stand or fall together, and the main arguments against their authenticity affect them all three equally.

Not only are the language and turn

of thought found in these letters frequently unlike St. Paul's, and the historical allusions incapable of being harmonised with anything that we know for certain of his life, but the letters, as a whole, are directed to a systematic organisation of Church affairs, which did not yet exist in St. Paul's lifetime.

It is very likely that certain fragments of 2 Timothy are really by St. Paul's hand. Compare the case of the Colossians.

21. The Second Epistle general of Peter.

Written about the same date as the Pastoral Epistles, 128 A.D.

This letter is clearly not by St. Peter, nor by the author of the First Epistle, whether that author was St. Peter or not. The writer draws largely

from St. Jude's Epistle. The letter contains several obvious indications of its late date.

NOTE.—As the Old Testament has its Apocrypha, so the canonical books of the New Testament were portions of an early Christian literature, some other samples of which still survive, and should be studied. Of these samples, one, called "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," has been recently discovered, and is assigned by some to the end of the first century, by others to 120–160 A.D. Three others, the Epistle of Barnabas, the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, and the Shepherd of Hermas, long held their place in the estimation of some Churches by the side of the books that we now reckon canonical; while some of these latter,

such as the Revelation, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Second of Peter, were by no means universally recognised. "The New Testament Canon has come down to us through ecclesiastical tradition, and it was not fixed in its present state before the beginning of the fifth century" (*Bleek*).

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